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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3075
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0415
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OPRC](#) [TH](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: THE "CHINESE" AMERICAN CORNER

REF: A. BANGKOK 6085

[1](#)B. BANGKOK 6204
[1](#)C. BANGKOK 4480

Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton, Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Emboffs visited the newly-renovated American Corner (AC) at Khon Kaen University as part of a broader reporting trip to Thailand's northeastern region (Reftel A, B). During a luncheon held after meeting with the school officials, university student volunteers at the AC approached Poloff wondering whether Poloff spoke Mandarin Chinese (Note: Poloff is ethnically-Chinese. End note.) and proceeded to practice their Mandarin with Poloff for the duration of the visit. All three student volunteers majored in English, and minored in Chinese. Unsolicited, one student commented that she preferred Chinese over English because it is "more artistic." The other students stated that their interest in Chinese was fueled by the prospect of employment after they graduate.

[1](#)2. (C) The students commented that while there are a number of good, native-speaking English teachers at their school, there is currently only one Chinese teacher from China. When a school official overheard this comment, she interjected excitedly that the Chinese teacher shortage would be improved shortly because Khon Kaen University is currently negotiating with a university in China (unnamed) to set up a "Confucius Center" at the University to teach both Chinese language and culture.

[1](#)3. (C) COMMENT. While the reasons for Chinese-language learning have been echoed elsewhere (Reftel C), it is nevertheless ironic that Chinese was being spoken (and China's economic affluence discussed) at an American Corner function. Although Chinese is by no means "replacing" the importance of English -- and by analogy China "replacing" America -- it is quickly catching up in its level of importance in the eyes of the Thai people. End comment.
BOYCE